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Jenny Ruth Yasi

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HARBOR VOICES

Fact * Fiction * Rumor

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4, MAY 2000

Monthly, For the Portland Harbor Community • Box 10, Peaks Island, Maine 04108

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Dirt

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Cleaning up Toxics in the Bay:

A Report from the

Casco Bay Estuary Project

When it rains or snows, the soil particles and organic matter in runoff water pick up oils, metals, pesticides, and other contaminants. The contaminants adhere to the soil or organic matter rather than mixing readily into water. Once in the bay, organic contaminants may float to the surface to avoid water, forming a sea-surface microlayer. Other contaminants adhere to sediments and particles of organic detritus. Initially, sediment and particles settle to the sea bottom near where they enter marine waters, though over time they may get dispersed by tides, currents, storms, or dredging. Water that lies over contaminated sediments may even test as clean because the toxics tend not to be water-soluble.

The most common toxic pollutants in Casco Bay are Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), a class of organic compounds primarily found in fossil fuels such as oil or coal. Most PAHs found in the sediments of the bay come from combustion sources (i.e., car and truck exhausts, and industrial and residential chimneys). PAHs enter the bay through combined sewer overflows and storm drains (particularly those that drain roads and parking lots), licensed discharges, old industrial sites or dumps, spills, deposition of atmospheric pollution from urban sources in and upwind of Maine, and highly developed residential and industrial areas in the bay watershed. Hydrocarbon pollution, another source of PAHs, is aggravated by the roughly 70 reported spills each year in Maine coastal waters.

Metals in Casco Bay are concentrated in and around Portland Harbor. Sources are numerous, including vehicle emissions, licensed discharges, air deposition, and historic industrial sites. Evidence of these early industries remains in the bay. At the site of a former coal gas works plant, which operated in Portland for almost a century, coal tar can still be seen oozing into the Fore River estuary.

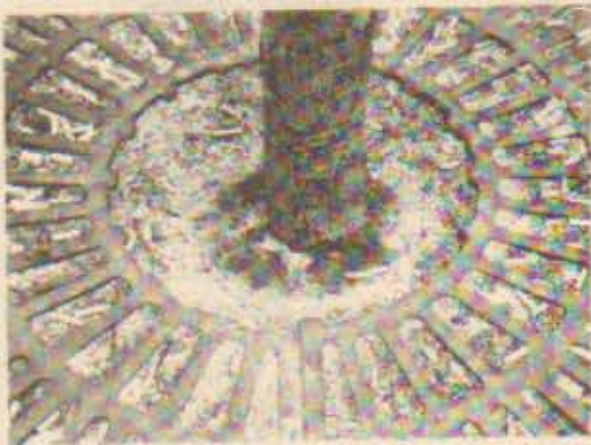
Ecologic Effects

- **Bottom-Dwelling Animals:** While thorough studies of toxic impacts on bottom-dwelling life in Casco Bay have not been completed, there is some evidence of damage. Animals that would be expected to occur in the flats of Back Cove are missing, potentially due to such factors as oil-related contaminants, heavy metals, combined sewer overflow discharges, sedimentary disturbances, or a combination of factors. Benthic life in the inner Fore River has been dramatically impaired.
- **Fisheries:** Sediment contamination can have serious ramifications for fisheries and marine life in Casco Bay. Fish and crustaceans can absorb toxics directly by exposure to contaminants in the water, and indirectly by eating contaminated food - particularly bottom-dwelling organisms that live and feed among the "modern mud" sediments on the bay's bottom. Blue mussels sampled in the outer Fore River had elevated levels of lead in their tissues, while those in the Presumpscot River had elevated levels of mercury. These findings confirm that mussels are accumulating metals, but do not indicate what harm is being done. Mussels are used nationally as an indicator species of toxic pollution.
- **Wildlife:** Mammals and birds that feed on benthic organisms or fish may absorb concentrated amounts of contaminants. Some of the tidal mudflats that represent the most important feeding areas for shorebirds, waterfowl, and wading birds - the Fore River, Back Cove, and Presumpscot



Cleaning up petroleum near the old Peaks Island Power Plant on Centennial beach. See pg. 5

(Continued on page 9)



Harbor Voices

is a place where we can agree to disagree: this is the intellectually open environment we value in our community, and hope to nourish in this forum. S

Published by the Yasi/Presgaves Family on Peaks Island,

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Write or e-mail us for writers' guidelines.

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July- Water Play,

August- Architecture.

Sept.- On Being Educated.

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From the Editor: Our Dirty Deeds

Jenny Ruth Yasi

When people asked me what we meant by choosing "dirt" as the theme for this issue, I said, "It means whatever you want it to mean." To me, the word "dirt" implies all the stuff we sweep under the rug, the stuff we are ashamed about. We don't know how to talk about "dirt."

But also, it's spring. I thought an issue on dirt would be an opportunity to discuss gardening. Like many Peaks Islanders, I'm excited to see my garden reawaken this spring. It's coming alive in a way I haven't seen for five years. I've actually got tulips blooming. We've got three rows of peas coming up, unmunched, and a pile of broccoli. The deer did kill some grapevines, and the elderberry which used to guard my herb gardens. But the earth has an amazing ability to recover.

Lot's of people told me that the problem was not "too many deer," on Peaks Island, but rather, it was "too many people." I don't believe that this is true. Even if there were no people on Peaks Island, 300 deer would have completely destroyed the diverse ecosystem of birds, plants, insects, trees. The deer needed a predator, and this year, we were it.

People are not the most numerous species on earth. We're not the most important. The numbers of bacteria in the soil dwarf our importance as life on earth. The earth has room for us. But it cannot support 10 billion cars. It can't support 10 billion people living like Bill Gates. It can't support 10 billion people who dump Drano down the toilet, and bleach in the wash.

Eating wild meat where it is abundant is much less damaging to the earth than eating farmed meat. I like to think that our island experience with deer is trying to remind us of our right relationship to the earth. Instead of peeling away the cellophane and slapping a chicken on the grill, we had to look in into the eyes of the animals that we had killed. We had to notice our relationship to the earth, and that's a good thing. Yet everyday, we continue to kill, and pollute and waste energy, and this is invisible to us. We do as Mazi Oscar Mokeme suggests — we see in other people all the ways they fail, all the ways they waste or pollute, or live irresponsibly. But we don't really want to notice it in ourselves.

Like all of us, I leave a little trail of toxic residue on the earth from my life, violence from the things I consume every day. The first step toward reducing our violence is just to become conscious of it. I ate some deer meat recently. I chewed it very slowly, and I can't really explain this feeling, but it was like courage and humility. I felt grateful in a way that I sometimes do when I'm eating wild blackberries, I knew I was just a part of the earth. I watched a little girl eating mussels, and she was enjoying them very much. Maybe if we can just really notice what we are eating, and where it comes from, we will also begin to live more cleanly with the earth, and take better care of it.



King Middle School students have been working on park design ideas that they will submit to the City of Portland. They feel that a park between Somerset, Marginal Way and the Franklin Arterial would be a nice thing for the City of Portland. The students say they are enjoying this "expeditionary" style of learning, which in this case includes studying soil testing in science; the history of Portland parks in social studies; in language arts they are writing proposals for their park; in math, graphing and measuring for their parks; in computers, laying out their design, etc. Here, they conduct research.

Commentary

Recycling as a Viable Option to Disposal in the Portland Area

Suzanne Snowden

In contemplating the writing of this article, I had to consider all the options of Why Not to recycle. Recycling can be a real pain for some, especially if our lives are busy with kids, work, family commitments, etc. But if you live in Portland, or on one of its islands, recycling for residents is a must! Portland adopted the residential curbside recycling in conjunction with its "pay per bag" waste disposal program almost a year ago. It has been called a tremendous success by many, including residents and others in the waste and recycling field around the state.

But, Why Recycle? We live in an area that continues to grow and expand, but still, Maine is admired all over the world for the state's amazing natural resources. When we don't recycle, we are just dumping recyclable materials (that can be used to produce other durable products) into regional incinerators and landfills (which are become few and far between). Throwing away materials which could be reused by others is truly a "waste" of resources. Even the folks who operate RWS think that incinerating recyclable materials is a waste!

Since I work in the solid waste field and mentor businesses on the reasons why To Recycle, and simply as a mother, I do understand that sometimes the issues of convenience gets in the way. But, today in the Portland area, recycling has become more convenient than ever. Yes, recycling takes up some storage space in homes and businesses. Yes, recycling does cost something to have a service provider come and take it all away.

I first started to recycle when I lived in Windham some 11 years ago. Then when I moved to Portland, RWS was being permitted and I worked for a company that was assisting RWS with its permits. I started to stockpile recyclable materials like milk jugs, cereal boxes, cans and clear glass in my garage. It was probably a fire hazard, but I was not going to keep throwing it all away! Since then, recycling has taken off in most of the communities around Portland, and now in Portland and on Peaks Island. We buy many products made with recycled papers, plastics, glass and tin. Yes, I am passionate about recycling, but I am even more passionate about reducing waste.

Waste reduction "at the source" is really the way to go, especially if you don't like to recycle. Especially on an island, it makes sense to avoid buying things which come wrapped in tons of wasteful packaging, because once a thousand people have trucked trash onto the islands, it costs some money to truck it off. It also saves your household money when you've got recycling as your "excuse" to avoid fad toys that break before you've got them home, clothes that shred in a season, beverages that are packaged in individual squeeze plastic bottles (wrapped in plastic, wrapped in cardboard). Just by making a habit of thinking about how I am eventually going to have to dispose of a purchase, I find I am not so likely to buy things that I don't really need. And when I think about how chemicals like Drano, or paint thinner or chlorine affect the environment – and how limited the space is for hazardous waste disposal – I avoid buying those chemicals entirely, in favor of less earth-toxic options.

So, in doing our part to keep Maine "the way it should be", think before you purchase, purchase wisely (and hopefully purchase items made from recycled materials) in order to reduce waste in the first place. Find reuse for unwanted items such as donations to local charities and swap shops at transfer stations, then recycle what you cannot help but generate and that cannot be reused.



Island children make excellent toy sailboats from reusable "junk".

Solid waste in Maine is a BIG DEAL and affects every one of us. Consider the wiser options before you pitch that can in the trash bin. Wiser is better! Happy Spring!

*Suzanne Snowden is Program Manager, WasteCap Maine Program
(WasteCapME@aol.com)*

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Two Kinds of Dirt

Arnold Berndt

One kind of dirt is in the carpet. Another is in our mind. But what is a dirty mind? It depends on "morals" and right and wrong. But there's no absolute moral. On one side of the river, abortion is a great sin and a crime. On the other end of the bridge it is perfectly legal and morally accepted.

Many years back, I lived for two years in Kenya and Uganda, East Africa. I was one time the guest of honor at a private dance. A group of beautiful young girls performed a tribal dance. Afterwards, they expected my appreciation. They stood in line where everyone expected a friendly pat on the lower part of their back. I would have a dirty mind if I did that at an American church gathering!

The German socialist party recently had a caucus, and they debated how to reduce social spending. Suddenly, the doors of the hall opened and in walked a man followed by three women. All wore only face masks and carried a sign, "The Emperor Has No Clothes." They weren't arrested – why would they be arrested in Germany for being nude? Could that happen at a caucus of our Republican party?

Maybe the dirty mind is a result of a lot of hypocrisy. We try to force other people to adopt our standards, but often it seems our own mind is dirty when we see something dirty in other people's behavior. On y soit qui mal y pense (Evil to him who thinks evil).

And on another kind of "dirt." As long as we fund our schools from real estate taxes, we can't have good schools, because school communities will not be able to raise enough money to pay for qualified teachers. Likewise, because we are forced to collect high real estate taxes, we cannot have affordable housing. Our European nations pay for their schools out of general revenue. I respectfully suggest that we take the European approach under consideration.

Arnold Berndt is 93 years young and lives on Peaks Island.

Ted O'Meara from the *Portland Press Herald*, confirmed to me that after June 30th, the daily paper won't be accepting Mark's Showplace or similar advertising! We needed this good news, because we were about to get into trouble protesting the idiot weeklies and the source and product of their dirty money, but now we can just focus on the positive (or try!). The *Portland Press Herald* equated it to their policy which refuses to accept tobacco dollars. Wow! Maybe sanity is returning to the planet. Send the *Press Herald* a card, and let them know if you appreciate their stance.

Portland City Hall and many local businesses got hit with the ILOVEYOU virus. If you have Outlook Express, and you go to tools, then inbox assistant, you can set your mail to reject anything containing ILOVEYOU (or other virus names).

Casco Bay Lines freight and boat rates have gone up for the summer to the islands. The summer minimum charge for freight is \$2.55 for Peaks, and \$3.05 for Long, Chebeague, and Cliff. So you might want to team up with a friend on shopping days...

Constables for Little Diamond, Great Diamond, and Cushings Island (respectively, **Phil Lee**, **Ann Webber**, and **Dave Pederson**) went to do a day long constables' training in town recently. Seems like a good idea. Constables are paid and appointed by the City to be "the eyes and ears" of the Portland police. **Tom Fortier** (Portland's Neighborhood/Island Administrator) says the city is looking to hire a constable for Cliff. But you have to live on Cliff Island, Sherlock. Interested Cliff Island residents should call him at 756-8288.

Little and Great Diamond Islands residents are happy



Arthur Fink and Ann Foster Tabbutt are organizing a "Walk With the one You Love," around Peaks Island on Sunday afternoon June 18th. They say, "Everybody should feel safe to walk with the one he or she loves without fear of harassment or violence, whatever their gender orientation."

to be getting a water main project which will be bringing year round water to some residents this coming August.

On Peaks Island, the Ryefield/Seashore sewer extension project (which will also pass up Luther, Sterling, Central Ave, and elsewhere) will also begin kicking up dust in the full swing of tourist season this August. Yuck.

Jeff Tarling (the City Arborist) and **Dick Bradbury** (State entomologist) did a browntail moth survey this spring. Overall, they said the harbor area looks pretty good. They said they did see a few webs, but not enough to justify spraying.

On Peaks Island, residents are noticing some plants coming back to life. But sadly, it will be slow recovery for many species. Wild Sarsaparilla, Lady's Slippers, Lily of the Valley, May Pop, etc. hasn't come back yet where it used to be. And deer are still munching down tulips in unfenced yards. People are guessing that right now there's at least thirty deer on the island. State wildlife biologist **Phil Bozenhard** says in early May, there just isn't that much food in the woods for the deer, so they gravitate toward lawns and flower beds. By early June, he thinks the deer we're seeing now will go deeper into hiding.

In any case, City deer management plans this year call for trying to integrate the deer management plans of all the Portland Harbor islands. Island Administrator **Tom Fortier** said it seemed like a good idea to have all the islands communicating together about the issue ("Even Long Island, if they'd like to join us," he said. "I think that would be neat,"), because deer do swim between the islands, and it's a problem that is best resolved if all the islands work together cooperatively.

New people on the Portland Deer Management committee include **Gordon Griffin** (Cliff Island), **Sam Tucker** (Great Diamond), **Dave Pederson** (Cushing Island); and **Betty Heller**, **Suellen Roberts**, and **Mary Jane Burnett** from Peaks. On May 16th

the deer management planning group will be having an open meeting at the Peaks Island Community Room, at 6:30 p.m., to share their process and get input from island residents.

At 7:30 p.m., same place, same evening, there will be a public meeting to discuss designing the gravel pit closure and restoration plans for land that was originally given to the City by the Casco Bay Island Community Development Association as "recreational open space." Over the past dozen years turned into an unofficial "gravel pit." The restoration of the gravel pit goes hand in hand with the slow but steady completion of the new Peaks Island transfer facility. See the related editorial in our "Kids Only" page.

Tom Fortier says there are 18 evergreens (5-6ft high) set to be planted on the berm around the Peaks Island transfer station, and 8 austrian pines. Tom insists the berm building is not yet complete, and that it will be extended down the Brackett Ave. side of the property.

Bob Cook is saying now that Peaks has reduced it's waste so significantly with the recycling that maybe the island won't be forced to have a stationary trash compactor after all! Many residents felt that the compactor truck was doing the job much more economically, and more discretely in the landscape, than the compactor proposed by Cook a few years ago, when money was apparently easier to come by.

Now that we've got **Peter O'Donnell** back on the City Council, we've got a promise that at least one islander will sit on the OceanGate committee. That's going to turn out to be very important for a very big reason: parking. Right now, City plans call for adding only fifty spots designated for paid islander parking. But it is entirely unclear how many free island parking spots are going to disappear. What will happen if there are one hundred residents who can't find parking — free or paid — near the CBL ferry terminal? Better make friends with someone who lives on **Munjoy Hill**. And it is entirely possible that islanders are going to have to come up with a whole new system for everyday mainland transportation — like the bus. Maybe **Nancy J. Hoffman** can hold a workshop for the rest of us in "car sharing." By the way, **Marianne Jaffee** has organized a "citizen's group" meeting on the 18th at 7:30 p.m. at the Island Cafe on Peaks Island. The purpose will be to discuss Ocean Gate once again on an informal basis and Peter O'Donnell will be in attendance.

Golly, almost forgot to report an island crime! Peaks Island officers reported that Blow Bros. came to the station looking for missing porta-potties. The company said that they thought they had leased them to a company called 227. Company 227, meanwhile, doesn't seem to exist.

OpSail 2000 is sending a ripple of nervous indigestion around the waterfront. The question is, how will all the boats that visit the harbor this summer discharge their sewage? Unless everyone holds it till they go home, it seems we've got a little problem. **Friends of Casco Bay**, which runs the sewage pump-out boat is working to improve their sewage-holding capacity, but they've got a way to go. So to speak.

Honorary Islanders **Kevin** and **Karen Hawks** (who now live in Gorham) have a new baby boy, **Matthew James Hawks**, born in early May.

We need news correspondents. Send news bites, announcements, calendar items, thoughts and ideas to voices@maine.rr.com or Box 10 Peaks Island, ME. 04108



Kyra and Evan Michalski display a model which shows the way that a septic tank leaches fluids into the ground at an earth day celebration on Peaks Island.

Earth Day

2000

Dance on Peaks



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CENTENNIAL BEACH CLEAN-UP UNDER WAY

BY JENNY YASI

In early May, Central Maine Power began bringing out equipment to clean up an area of Centennial Beach on Peaks Island, which had been discovered to be contaminated with a tar-like petroleum by-product of an old gas manufacture industry.

"When I first heard about it, I was surprised it hadn't been found before," said Nick Hodgkins, of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The waste is believed to have been either dumped and buried directly on the beach, or piped out there for disposal as a waste product generated by Casco Bay Light and Power, a gas manufacture plant in operation from 1907-1946.

CMP bought the property in 1965. "It's a very tar-like substance," says Hodgkins. "It was an early asphalt, and I'm sure many of Peaks Island's early roads were paved with this.

The oilier stuff was difficult to work with, and although we haven't found any sign of a pipe going down to the beach, I've seen that elsewhere, where companies would run a discharge pipe right out to the nearest body of water, and it wouldn't surprise me terribly if they found something like that."

Early explorations of the CMP property found that this contamination seems to be largely isolated to a 100x100 foot patch of beach. It was discovered last fall when soil in the area was dug up so that new water supply lines to Peaks could be laid. CMP reported the contamination to the DEP and had to be permitted by the DEP. The Dept. of Marine Resources, the City of Portland and the Harbor Commission to do this cleanup.

We haven't fully evaluated the property," said Roy Koster, CMP's Senior Environmental Specialist. "or determined if there might be something else going on, but we have a couple of micro wells, we did some digs and the problem seems to be largely confined to the beach." When asked about the cost of this project, he said, "It's not cheap. Hopefully this year we might be

able to take down the above ground tank, and possibly the generators." He said CMP has no plans to sell the property, as they use it as a base of operations on the island.

Zev and Julie Eisenberg were out walking on the beach one day with a metal detector, and found a strange rock-like blob that registered metals. They brought the blob home, and found that it burned with a strong tar smell. "I don't know what that was," said Koster. "What we are cleaning up is residue from a coal tar operation, the constituents include naphthalene and other unpronounceables. As far as toxicity goes - enough of a dose of anything can be a problem." As true with any petroleum product, there is a concern that frequent or long-term contact could cause disease many years



These are the tanks CMP says they would like to remove sometime soon.

in the future, and this is the reason they are cleaning up the beach. But he said there is no dioxin or other high level toxin that would make people ill with a minimal exposure. "That shore line has probably been built up. There have been oil spills in the harbor," he said. When someone finds something on the beach, it's hard to know for sure what it is and where it came from, but he conceded that wave action could have turned some of the coal-tar residue into these rock-like balls scattered along the shore. "But it's been at least 50 years, and its reached an equilibrium. It doesn't appear to be moving anymore."

Nick Hodgkins from the DEP indicated he was pleased that the beach is being cleaned up. "Playing with any petroleum product - it's not great, it's not awful. I wouldn't advise people to play around with the stuff. It's not an immediate threat. It would be an issue for the longterm." He said that the trick to cleaning up the beach will be simply racing the tide. "We dealt with sediments in the intertidal zone in Rockland last year. And when they brought in the fill, it stayed in place really well. We've got seaweed growing on there and everything."

This waste will be trucked out to Commercial Recycling in Scarborough which will turn it into asphalt and aggregate for paving roads. Nick Hodgkins and Roy Koster both intend to be monitoring the clean-up, which is being conducted by Clean Harbors. Nick says that "they haven't found anything else of big concern. Once they get digging, they'll be able to tell if they need to do more. We're planning to be there when this is done, and we're going to want more investigation on the property."

*Thanks! And Don't
Quit Yet!*
Julie Goell

CMP did remove some soil that was bordering our property, across from our house, down by the bushes; it was a 15 or 20 foot strip of soil that went up to the road where they were laying the new water pipe. They noticed the contamination and decided to replace the dirt, and we appreciate that.

But recently, when they were digging the test pits on the beach, I went down to explain my concern about other debris on the CMP embankment there. One of the men said, "Your tax dollars would be better spent on well baby care." I looked into their test pits -- the sludge water was really filthy. As they dug a pit, it immediately filled up with an oily looking sludge. A week or so later Mr. Koster was on-site examining the pits. He said, "Good news! We've decided to clean it up!" I said, "gee, that's great! Can I show you something that might be contributing to the problem?" We walked over to the area that slopes down from the plant parking lot. At each high tide that hill is uncovered more and more, exposing pieces of pipe, disconnected bits of cable, fragments of metal and rusty machine parts, gas caps and such. As we stood talking, I extracted a pile of rusty machine debris.

He said, "Well, this hill is pretty stable, I think we should leave it alone."

I don't think it is stable; it gets washed away with each tide. I take children for walks in that area, and they always remark on the smell. We've picked up these tar balls - they are *all* over the beach.

That site is a very popular beach site in the summer, one of the nicest sandy spots, with children picnicking, swimming, boating. Having a hill with rusty pieces of cable and junk protruding is just not acceptable. Since then, I've spoken with [CMP spokesperson] Betty Nickerson, and she said she thought the problem of the hillside bears looking into, especially in light of the approaching summer season. We really appreciate their efforts and know they are cleaning up a mess they didn't create, but still, we hope they don't quit now!



Avner Eisenberg watches the clean-up on Centennial Beach.

Dirt is Neat

Art Astarita



Some call it soil, others call it sand, pebbles, earth, regolith or even, incoherent rock material. It all describes what's on our shoes, especially during the spring here in Maine. It really represents nature's erosive forces that are wearing down our planet. There is a difference between dirt and rock. Dirt pours through your fingers; a rock drops from your hands courtesy of weight and gravity. In geologic timeframe, dirt is the product of rock weathering and, in a sense, dirt is what makes up the composition of a rock. Along the line of "was there a chicken before the egg?"

Ever think about the earth's history? Our Mother Earth is over 4½ billion years old! The blue planet was born from gas and gravitating planetary dust. As the gas and "dirt" came together, chemical reactions violently spewed out ash, liquids, and more gases. As the utter coldness of galactic space cooled this mess of gas, liquid and interplanetary dirt, a crust formed.

This is akin to what happens with chocolate pudding! As it cools a skin forms over the top unless you cover it with plastic. Don't ya hate that skin atop chocolate pudding when you don't cover it with plastic? Anyway, I digress....

Atop our earth's crust, we build our homes. Some people live on thousands of feet of dirt and miles of more solidified dirt, called rock. Others, like those of us on Casco Bay Islands, live on only inches or feet of dirt, and then miles of rock. The dirt on Peaks, Long Island, Cliff, etc. is only 10,000 to 12,000 years old at best. Whereas, the rocks underfoot are estimated to be between 400 million years to one billion years old!

Is it sometimes hard to grasp the temporal sense of those large numbers?

The rocks of Casco Bay represent the root of an old mountain chain; part of the northern Appalachian Mountains. As it was uplifted by shifting continental plates, processes of erosion also began to wear it down. The hills and low mountains along our coast probably were once as high as the California coastal mountains are today, maybe higher! At the same time back then, the Atlantic Ocean was being born. Within the molten mantle (the "pudding" below the earth's crust), the eastern, stable edge of the Canadian Shield and the western edge of "Avolonia," — the land which would become "Europe" — started to float apart, by heat convection. Well, as you might imagine, such movements and cooling cause cracks and fractures in the dirt and rocks of the crust. There is heat and pressure as the dirt and rocks were squeezed together and grind past one another. Some rocks move atop others while others are bent or folded like salt-water taffy. Throughout the geologic eras of the Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian and the Devonian — a span of more than 100 million years — volcanoes were active from Eastport to the Merimac.

Can't you hear that weather report now, "...heavy volcanic haze, highly toxic water and minimal oxygen levels from Eastport to the Merimac. Small craft warnings advisory to stay away from this part of the planet"! Gee, maybe Mars had better weather then. I digress again...

Anyway, back 300 to 400 million years ago, with all these volcanoes and squeezing and grinding, the volcanic-rich, black sand beaches were metamorphosed to mica-rich sandstone. The minerals of hornblende and garnet appeared. In fact, small, weathered garnets can be seen on Peaks Island in rocks from Evergreen Point to south of Trefethen Clubhouse. On any geological map of Maine, you can see the great Norumbega fault system. It's Maine's answer to California's San Andreas Fault! Really! The Norumbega fault system extends from Durham, New Hampshire to north of Calais, Maine and on into Canada. However, the San Andreas is active today, very active. The Norumbega was active from 380 million years ago to 280 million years ago. It isn't active anymore. We live on what is referred to as a passive continental margin. THANK HEAVENS!

You might wonder about the earthquakes in Maine. We do have them, and most of the movement centers on the Saint Lawrence Seaway. This area is still under pivotal crustal stretching. Also, the whole State of Maine is rebounding from the weight of multi-mile high glacial ice that retreated barely some 10,000 years ago.

So, the dirt of Casco Bay comes from the erosion of metamorphosed, mica-rich sandstones that were pressed together, folded, stretched and pulled apart. When the rocks were pulled apart, heat and pressure were released and silica-rich (quartz) liquid filled the voids. Also, molten volcanic material (lava) intruded into the cracks. The glaciers left us with a thin layer of rubble soil and a couple of huge boulders. The few available thicker glacial deposits of soil on the islands have been used by the Army to build and cover military installations, the Battery Steel complex among others.

Not all the cracks in the rock are filled with quartz and lava; some of them are open. The complex maze of cracks provides

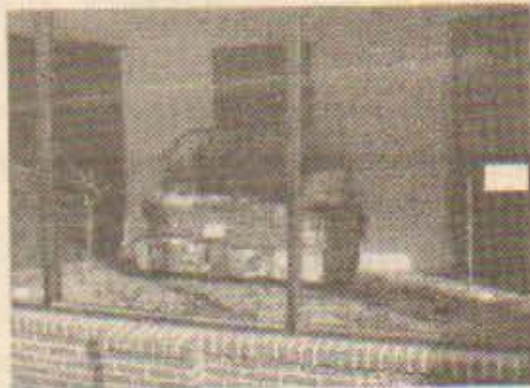


Russ Edwards displays his dog's muddy belly on Centennial Beach.

(Continued on page 8)



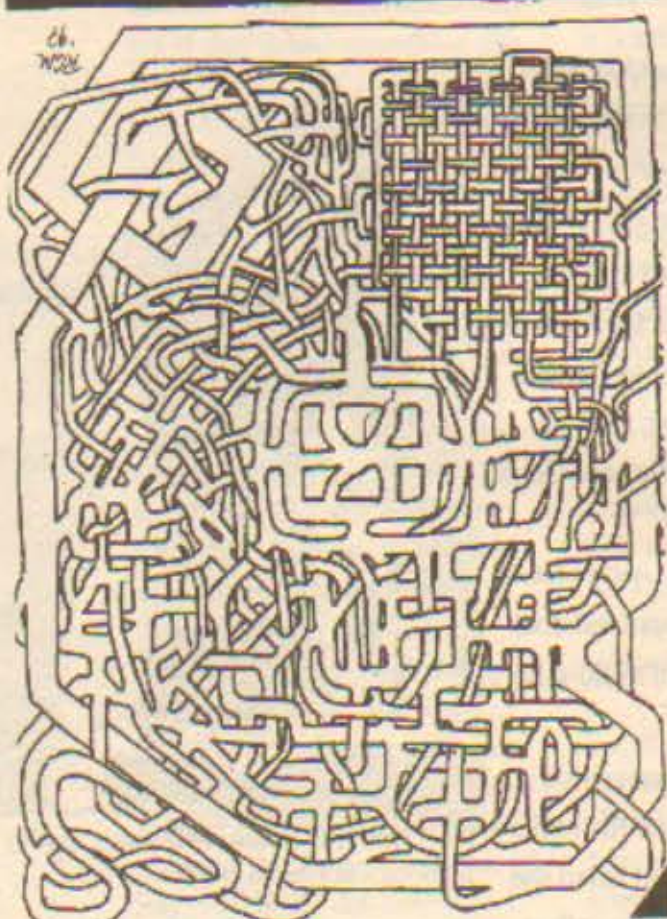
Portland Press Herald artist and honorary islander Pete Gorski rides on the top deck.



Architect Christopher Campbell, a relatively new resident of Portland, asked six local artists (Cat Anderson, Thomas Baldwin, Kate Barnes, Timothy Cichocki, Christopher Keister, Lisa Pixley) to wrestle with the following idea "Does it go with the couch?" to fill his Congress Street building window over the coming months. Cat Anderson of Peaks Island had her window on display in early May.

"The couch project allowed me an opportunity to use found materials to express gratitude for the art in our every day lives. In the texture of bark I see an unfolding narrative the likes of which I could never recreate with a paint brush or pencil."

Cat Anderson has had her work at Greenhut Gallery and Local 188 this year. She also has artwork included in the USM's Words and Images 2000 Art/Literary journal. She lives on Peaks Island and works for a clown.



There is a single dirt road that winds through the maze and connects to no others. Roads do go over and under each other. Can you find it? Answer in next month's Harbor Voices. (puzzle by Ralph Morrie, Peaks Island.)

R-R-R-Vit

Brown Snake coils
out of sight in the new rock
garden, a satisfied Julia Child.
No trace of her fixin's
from moments before,
wherein one glorious swoop,
a gallant leaping frog
became her mouth,
fleshy legs pinned by the teeth,
pink feet flailing.
For half an hour
little Jonah-frog S.O.S.'ed
from inside this whale
of a snake,

R-r-r-vit, r-r-r-vit,

Quiet Prince Frog!
Julia's worked out
a new recipe;
Chop here, chomp there,
30 minutes
to warm the throat,
then r-r-ram it!
She got all of him down
dirt free, clean sweep,
no blood on the slate or
waste in the shade.
Nasty-neat, foot long,
inch-'round-the-cinch,
gourmet chef-snake.

Vegan witness, where do you
stand? Yesterday
it was 'pooh-pooh'
to violence. Today it's 'hip-hip'
for the Rock Garden Maker.
Did no one tell you, on high
horses or not,
a future can trip
on one silent stone?

Practice then, Princess,
today's divine sound,

'R-r-r-vit, r-r-r-vit'

Louder. As if tomorrow,
your earthen self
will be called upon
to garnish a piece
of God's Little Mince.

by Susan Hiester Webster
Peaks Island

(Continued from page 7)

the space for water and nutrients to flow, almost like blood vessels provide space for nutrients to flow through our body. And if the fissures in the ground are like blood vessels, the soil at this point in the metaphor could be compared to living skin cells. Soil is absolutely teeming with life. There is practically another world under our feet, of interwoven plant roots, microorganisms, mesofama (which feed on small bugs), viruses, bacteria. While the human population of the world is at about 6 billion, a soil population of 5 billion could be found in 4 cubic centimeters of soil.

Together and separately, soil microorganisms, viruses and bacteria produce enzymes which digest and recycle "dead" matter. The life in the soil protects and shapes life on earth just as the skin on our bodies protects and shapes us. It helps the various other "organs" of earth, (the atmosphere, bodies of water, the sun) to function effectively.

The earth is a digestive system, a place to store and break-down food, even junk food. Given enough time the life in soil can often digest and neutralize such plant/animal toxins as petroleum products, DDT, and other man-made pollutants. If your soil microorganisms aren't happy because they've been killed by pesticide or fertilizer over-application, they can't do their job and plants won't grow well. Life depends on soil bacteria to transform and transport nutrients (like calcium, magnesium, phosphorus), enabling plants to digest breakfast, and us to digest plants. Soil, water, and oxygen work together. Clean soil, means we have healthy clean water. Clean air helps to protect clean soil. Topsoil filters, feeds, and protects the fresh water that we rely upon. So this "skin" of the earth has evolved to have a different kind of beauty than the skin of our faces. It's a lot older than we are, with more wrinkles, more character. Really, dirt is pretty neat. We don't appreciate it as well as we could, we often take it for granted. So if we sometimes get annoyed with picking up dirt, we should remember that dirt is always picking up after us, too!



Stephen Andrews walks instead of drives in the Old Port. And he knows a real Italian sandwich!

Clean Drinking Water On The Islands

Art Astaritia

As spring thaws the ground, the snow and ice turns to water and rain falls on the island dirt. Most of the water flows to the ocean, on Peaks (for example) by way of over 8 different island watersheds. Most of the water will flow into the ocean, evaporate, or be soaked up by vegetation. Only about 10% of our average annual precipitation seeps into the cracks and crevasses and becomes groundwater. Although most of the Peaks homes use Sebago Lake water, about 10% of the island homes use groundwater for domestic consumption. Currently active, there are about 80 private groundwater wells on the island. Both Long and Cliff Islands do not receive water from the mainland. They depend on what is called a sole-source aquifer. If the groundwater aquifer (reservoir) gets damaged or polluted, the residents have to pipe water from well areas that are not damaged or engage in a (costly) project to pipe water from the mainland. Cushing gets all their water from the Portland Water District-Sebago Lake. Each island has some fresh water from snow melt and rain.

Water picks up and carries chemicals from rock and dirt. Some of the things you will find in local dirt are silica (quartz; computer chip stuff), iron, manganese, aluminum, potassium and magnesium. These minerals and a few more are in our water. Sounds like a vitamin list? Analyses of 21 Peaks Island groundwater wells have been completed; 48 different parameters have been tested. From this data there are no real nasties in Peaks water so far. The iron can cause bacteria to grow, but this isn't harmful to consume. A sulfur smell can occur if bacteria is not kept in check. Filter changes and dosing with bleach are typical routines to correct such problems.

I have received lab analysis on 22 wells-all Peaks Island. Of the nine drinking water wells, arsenic is not present. However, in the 1997 sampling two of the City's monitoring wells around the recently capped P.I. landfill had arsenic above the current EPA standards. Last month I received the City's January, 2000 analysis. Some wells were destroyed with the blasting and I have yet to thoroughly review the results.

I have been given 5 radon sample analysis. Only one above EPA's recently set level. Nothing really significant.

The amount of "open" land area is directly related to resupply of the groundwater. Groundwater in the Bay may be considered as negligible. Each island's groundwater is separate and unique from each other island and the mainland. However, so is the thickness of soils, amount of vegetation cover, type of rock, topography temperature and amount and type of precipitation. But if you have asphalt and buildings covering the ground, than that prevents the ground from having a chance to receive water.

The 1986 Gerber report on Portland's Island Groundwater Management analyzed many wells on Long and Cliff; Long had 56 wells and Cliff had 28 wells. But the total number of wells on each island is fuzzy since not all wells can be assumed to have been counted.

When water sits too long, unused, in the copper pipes, the water interacts with all the minerals. The chemistry is especially active when air temperatures fluctuate. Flush those pipes and change those filters and faucet screens regularly! Bleach that well! If you have a water softening system, make sure it's working properly; and the chemicals are kept full and fresh.



June Bergh shows off a parrot she adopted from a humane society.

(Continued from page 1)

River - also have the highest concentration of contaminated sediments in the bay.

- **Human Health:** Various toxic pollutants (e.g., PCBs, DDT, some PAHs, and dioxin) concentrate in the liver, fat, and tissue of animals and can cause significant human health impacts. Bioaccumulative toxic chemicals can cause cancer, adverse reproductive effects, birth and developmental effects, organ damage, and deleterious impacts on the nervous, immune, and endocrine systems. With the exception of testing for dioxin in lobsters and clams, and the testing of toxics in lobster and mussel tissue, there has been no risk assessment of potential health hazards from eating seafood in Casco Bay.

Steps taken to reduce the rate of contamination entering the bay include:

- industrial and municipal cooperation with discharge permit limits and pre-treatment programs
- reduction of combined sewer overflows
- better oil-spill prevention
- cleanup of some hazardous waste sites
- implementation of best management practices in road construction, major development, farming, and forestry
- elimination of leaded gasoline
- increased awareness among citizens and boaters regarding safe disposal of toxic materials
- discontinued use of shoreside dumps

What can you do?

- To continue reducing levels of sediment contamination, more attention must now be focused on nonpoint sources such as runoff from roads and parking lots. If measures to reduce pollution are taken, the ecosystem will eventually cleanse itself. Contaminated sediments will become "biologically unavailable" as new sediments wash off the land and cover them, and chemical and degradative processes reduce their toxicity. And as cleaner sediments enter the bay, existing contaminants will be made less toxic through further dilution.
- Plant native vegetation in and around your property to promote a variety of wildlife species (call CBEP for planting ideas, 780-4474).
- Maintain vegetative buffer areas next to water. These buffers provide habitat and act as filters for stormwater and groundwater flow from upland development.
- Cut down on your use of household hazardous waste such as solvents and cleaners and try the less toxic alternatives (CBEP has information on the alternatives).
- Try not to use pesticides and herbicides on your lawn and garden. If you feel you must, use only in limited quantities and always provide vegetative buffers on your property, they help to take in the chemicals before they are further dispersed into the environment.
- Keep a clean running car and other home equipment such as lawn mowers and boats. This will cut down on excess emissions such as oil and gas.

This article was contributed by the Casco Bay Estuary Project, University of Southern Maine, PO Box 9300,

East Germany RECOMPOSING

By Julie Goell, on tour with The Casco Bay Tumblers

The Casco Bay Tumblers Klezmer band started on Peaks Island. Peaks' players are Danny Mills-clarinet; Nancy 3. Hoffman-accordion, vocals; Julie Goell-Bass, vocals; Landlubbers are Carl Dimow-flute, guitar; and Hayes Porterfield-drums, xylophone. The group has just returned from its first overseas concert tour to Germany.

The Tumblers arrived in Dresden at sunrise, blinking from a sleepless flight. We wandered into the old part of the city, five ghosts in the drizzle, searching for breakfast. The river was a warm and liquid gold. We snaked along its tree-lined banks. Charred remains of war, in varying states of decay and reassembly, greeted us in silent witness. Old Dresden, in contrast with modern Soviet "power" architecture, is incredibly beautiful, silhouetted against the Elbe. Once known as the Jewelbox of Europe, and until recently under East German rule, Dresden is finally rising from the rubble left by US bombs half a century ago. In the first hours of morning, the reconstruction was grinding into action.

I watched, fascinated, as masons sorted through large stone fragments, organizing them on long scaffolds. They removed mud and grit while specialists fit damaged pieces with inserts of new stone, like dentists performing fine inlays. Their surfaces were left unfinished and blackened from fire, a reminder of war. I wondered whether we could have stopped Hitler without destroying Dresden.

We hustled to the train and were soon speeding to West Berlin. Hours later, crammed into a "combi" with our instruments, we taxied past Potsdammer Platz into East Berlin. Once seat of the Reichstag, and still flaunting its Brandenburg Gate, Potsdammer Platz once lay just beyond Checkpoint Charlie. The old neighborhood, now razed to the dust, is blossoming into a futurist metropolis. Multi-colored cranes pitched in all directions busily erect a city of commerce.

We probed deeper into former East Berlin. Five years ago, the city still languished, gray and uninviting, in the shadow of the Wall. Its avenues are now dotted with cafe's and shops which tout the latest fashions. Crumbling, bullet-ridden facades are now spackled and freshly painted. After West Berlin, I was refreshed by the lack of advertising. The young people retain a sweetness and simplicity that is charming.

Next day, before sound check, Nancy 3 was whisked away by an international conspiracy of carillon players to a bell tower in Tiergarten Park. Her original carillon spiel, "Zev Eisenberg," in three Hassidic dance movements, rang out sweet and Jewish for all of Berlin.

Emotions produced by the memory of the Holocaust are uncannily rendered into metal and stone by Daniel

Museum Berlin is a shattered Star of David, or a lightening bolt. The zig-zagging building is bisected by horrific underground hallways. False perspective, tilting pavements and unparallel lines leave the viewer off-balance and without air. Slit views into gaping air shafts let one hear but not see children playing in the neighborhood beyond. These elements conspire to evoke fear, isolation and a nightmarish reality. Still naked of exhibits, the building alone is a sinister yet beautiful gestalt of dark times.

Our first concert was presented at a historical East Berlin landmark called Hackesches Hof. It's courtyards are home a thriving cultural night life. Site of the former Jewish quarter of Berlin, this hof was an infamous umschlag platz, or yard used for the assembly of Jews for transport to the camps. The Hackesches Hof Theater, where we played, is committed to presenting Yiddish language music and theater.

Being in Berlin added poignancy to our Yiddish songs. What goes through the mind of a Klezmer musician encountering 21st century Germany? Playing Jewish music in this place where the unspeakable happened, yet the proverbial forty years have also flowed under the bridge? How do you reconcile the past with the present?

The audience crowded around cafe tables and in bleachers. There were many young aficionados of Yiddish language and music. We were apprehensive at first but were greeted with such warmth and enthusiasm that we were soon at home in our music. We performed songs in Yiddish, a Brecht-Weill tune, and a ghetto song. The rest was instrumental dance music. And two encores, for Berlin!

We traveled by train to Chemnitz, former Karl Marx Stadt. The main square is a study in contrast: City Hall is a testimony to ponderous Saxon architecture. Across the way, an ice-tray building with glass shops features Gap. A Romanesque church, its saintly statuary replaced during Communism by figures of workers in overalls, spans the Middle Ages into Social Realism. I was startled by a ferocious three story bust of Karl Marx, against a backdrop of dreary Soviet housing projects and newly-sprouted western franchises. Just beyond Karl is a jeans store, festooned in American flags.

A priest in Chemnitz started the Jewish Cultural Festival. This year it began with laying a cornerstone for a synagogue! Locals attend festival events ranging from concerts to Yiddish plays. They claim Yiddish is close enough to Saxon dialect to enjoy performances in original. After a two hour concert we played three encores.

An invited delegation of twenty Chemnitz-born Jewish survivors from many lands invaded our dressing room. They

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY!

"Obuu Ozuu Enyi n' Isi , Welu Opka N'abor Abuzuu" is an African proverb which means that someone who is carrying an elephant on his /her head, shouldn't be picking at a cricket with his/her toe.

When we talk and think of dirt, it is easy to find dirt on others. We often like to blame another person for our faults and therefore removing attention from our realities. Then we judge others without realizing that we have no right to judge anyone. We are not the creator and we must accept others for who and what they are. This is what makes everyone unique. When you are pointing a finger at someone and blaming them for what you think is the dirt you found on them, behold that three of your fingers are pointing back at you. So when you think of dirt, think about yourself and what you are hiding inside of you. Be free to deal with your own dirt and discover your spiritual coping style.

Inside you, there you find: lies, hate, anger, material desires, fear, insecurities, loneliness, drunkenness, drug addiction, lack of self knowledge, corruption, envy, jealousy, lack of the knowledge of God. We preach love and practice self destruction, greed, uncleanness, all kinds of doubt, no respect for self. If you cannot respect yourself, you cannot respect others, for you cannot give what you don't have.

Solution: Heal self, explore your spiritual coping style, be honest with your self, remove those masks that you are hiding behind and be yourself. Go to church, go to synagogue, to mosque, to any space where you can discover God or whatever you conceive God to be. Teach your children about spirituality, plant it in their hearts, love your self and others, be planted in your community, be gentle with your self for your soul is all you have. Thrive and be happy!

Mazi Oscar Mokeme



(Continued from page 19)

greeted us cheerfully, like aunts and uncles at a Bar Mitzva. The city's effort to confront and heal old wounds, they said was much appreciated. They too seemed eager to reconcile the past and move forward. Warm like family, they promised to try and bring the Tumblers to their cities.

Our Portland cab driver brought us back to the Dresden question. He had been a U.S. airforce photographer in WW II. His job was flying reconnaissance missions over Dresden, documenting targets for the impending blitz. "Had to stop Hitler. Turn Dresden to dust. It was the only way to turn the Germans against him; by getting the people where it hurt most."

These words resonated sadly, especially after the kind reception and wonderful hospitality we had just experienced. I comprehend the explanation, especially as a Jew. Still, as a citizen of the world and as an artist, I feel Dresden belonged not just to Germany but to all of Europe and its story. Its loss is all our loss.

Julie Goell plays bass with the Casco Bay Tumblers and tours her solo show "Opening Night...One Woman's Carmen." Their next travels take the Tumblers on a goodwill tour of Lithuania in May.

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"THEY'RE NOT TOO SHABBY"
-Phil DeBuckett



Children's book author/illustrators Scott Nash, Annie Sibley O'Brien, and Nancy Nash go off together to a conference...



Cliff Island Teacher Earl MacVane retires after Twenty-three Years

Shown here on their bi-monthly outing to Peaks Island is Earl MacVane and his Cliff Island students. To visit Peaks Island, they all have to take the boat to Portland, then take the boat to Peaks — when you add the homne trip, this makes for a long day!

Mr. Mac as the children call him, was born and raised and went to school on the island where he's been teaching for 23 years. He says there will be about 9 children in the school next year. Cliff has 70 year round residents, and 500 summer residents. Mr. MacVane says that teaching on the island can be a bit more complicated than mainland teaching. The teacher has to answer the phone, do the administrative work, do the social work, answer the phone — in short, do everything. Mr. Mac's retirement is not good news for the island, who fear they will be hard-pressed to find a replacement...

May 2000

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Maine College of Art — through May 21 "Sa Schloff: Portrait Gallery." An installation incorporating portrait photography and objects. Also, "Recollected Images: Chansonetta Stanley Emmons at the Portland Museum of Art"					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 Cartooning with Jim Neales. PI Community Room, 10:15-11:45 Pre-reg. 766-2970
14 Mom	15 City Council Meets 1st and 3rd. Monday of each month	16 Deer committee presentation, 6:30 pm Meeting to discuss "gravel pit"/park, 7:30. Peaks Island Community room, PI school concert	17	18	19	20 Cartooning. See May 13
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	Send calendar listings to Box 10 Peaks Island, Maine 04108		

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See membership form on page five.

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Battery Steele has a long and somewhat twisted history. Did the Battery affect your life in some way? Do you have a story or some thoughts that you would be willing to share as part of an **oral history project**? 766-5792. Thanks.

Thank You Rosemont Pharmacy for your reliable Rx deliveries, Portland to Peaks, and beyond... Life is tough enough as it is, you make it easy... anonymous

Help Wanted: Advertising Representative. Fun job, Flexible hours. Creative, energetic people pleasers call 766-2390

June 10 & 11 Inanna workshop Percussion Workshop with Layne Redmond and Tommy Brunjes! Center for Cultural Exchange for more information call 766-5708

Dirt

Dirt and mud and muck and ooze,
Mom tells me to wipe my shoes.
Dust and gravel lots of muck,
Though I wipe it still no luck --
Brown and overall black dirt,
On my pants and on my shirt.
To my Mom I say "Oh goshers,
I have to put these in the washer!"
And before I finish math,
I certainly must take a bath.
But now I'm clean, no dirt today,
Tomorrow I'm going out to play!

Jessie Hawks



Editorial

By Sophia Presgraves and Riley Critchlow

We think it would be nice if the gravel pit project would get finished. What we'd like to see there is a place for kids of all ages to hang out and kick back. Maybe put in a gazebo for adults to have a quiet time and a small playground for younger kids. A small building could provide restrooms and a place to buy lunch, with plenty of trashcans. Lunch in the park would be a new fad. Unfortunately, the plan for the gravel to be taken out and a park to be put in seems to have gotten stuck somewhere between the drawing board and the door.

The nice thing about that piece of land is that it is just as easy to walk to as anything on the island. There are trails starting near this "park" that go all the way around the island. This will be a great place for taking a dog for a walk or bringing children to play.

The land is going to be a park, so we think that someone should start planning it. Some people envision a pond, or maybe a wading pool. Others wish to see it become a Garden of Eden with fruit trees and a community garden.

We think that the teenagers should help to design the park so that they will respect it. Some people would like to have a few buildings so that people can work there and watch for vandals. A team of youngsters could clean it up once a month and plant a garden, or something else just as nice.

In the mean time, any park will do. A community place for people to hang out doesn't seem like it should take so long to build. But, let's face it, the plans for this park got lost a long time ago!

Customer: Waiter, This coffee tastes like mud!
Water: Well, it was ground this morning!

Man piles dirt to stop the tide. Why waste time? Tide always gets the dirt out!

Flower PoT DiRT DeSSeRT

- 1 large package of Oreo Cookies (crushed)
- 1—8 oz. Package of Cream Cheese
- 1/2 stick margarine
- 3/4 cup confectionery Sugar
- 3 1/2 cups Milk
- 2 small boxes Instant Vanilla or chocolate pudding
- 10 oz. Cool Whip

Blend cream cheese, margarine & Conf. Sugar. Set aside. Mix milk, pudding and Cool Whip together well. Add Cream Cheese mixture to pudding mixture. Prepare Flower pot which is 8" across top. Wax paper should be placed in bottom to cover holes. Then layer the Oreo Cookies and the cream cheese pudding mixture. Alternate and end with the crushed Oreo's. Freeze overnight. Thaw 1/2 hour in refrigerator before serving. Top with silk flowers after it begins to freeze. Serve with spade.

Contributed by Marianne Jaffe

Upcoming topics On Being From Away ~ Water Play

Deadlines: the 25th of each month

voices@maine.rr.com
Box 10 Peaks Island,
Maine 04108

We welcome your poetry,
stories, letters, car-
toons, etc.



Harry and Mary Evelyn Holtz are Torin and Graham's grandparents.

Dirt You Can't Wash Away

Jenny Ruth Yasi

She found a new lump behind her mother's ear. "It's probably more cancer," says her mother. "Of course it's not," Maggie rubs her mother's skull, hair falling out in her hands. She gets a pan when her mother wants to throw up, and tissues; she massages the dry skin with Oil of Olay. They hold hands together, and watch *Black Beauty* on television.

Her father sings in the shower, sings when he's milking the goats, sings in his shop at the welder, in the paint shed. Perverse singing, swarthy, Italian. "And listen to you, so quiet," chided her mother. "You used to take after your father." But Maggie doesn't feel like singing anymore.

Heidi, the crunchy, smelly old goat has given birth to Pete, a strange little kid who won't nurse but takes milk from a bottle. Maggie puts Pete on a pillow by her mother's bed. Pete has hay in his wool, and Maggie's sneakers are mucky, but the mother whose eyes have only gotten bigger and bluer as her body has gotten so thin — her daughter can lift her to make the bed — she doesn't say anything about it.

Maggie's mother used to sing, too. Not in a bellowing voice, like Dad. But sweetly. Gently. Maggie had liked the feeling of it, her mother's body vibrating against her as it sang her a lullaby, her own lungs expanding as she'd learned it. Her mother also used to smoke, and wear a waitress uniform, and yell to her and her brother, and tell them to clean up. She used to come home late, after it was dark. Now she was home all the time.

Maggie liked to sleeping with the windows of her bedroom open, so she could hear the crickets, imagine them resonating in her blood, instructing her hair follicles to puff up or lay down, guiding the speed of her own blood flow to beat according to the outdoor temperature. At night, in bed, Maggie liked to lay still and make these little cheeping sounds.

Being a teenager is like singing, she thought. Something good, unavoidable, only she didn't feel like it right now. Or like baking cake, waiting for it to be done, and having to clean up after the mess. Or like when something important breaks and gone. Maggie's father's voice was of the something's breaking variety. He sang about the Irish, in honor of her mother, "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." And he sang, "Under the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," not a sign of cheerfulness or optimism, just a habit in the shower. But it made them laugh, it made his family like him better. He could be beating Maggie's brother one minute, slogging him with the broken belt, and singing in the shower the next. That's just the way he was.

One day the new priest in the house when she got home from school. Father Nichols. "Not pennies, not dimes, not quarters," he had introduced himself. "Don't forget it." He didn't seem as smart or kind as the old priest had been, but he stopped by to give her mother communion and promise that she would go to heaven. Maggie didn't want her mother to go to heaven, and she didn't like the way this priest spoke, or smiled, or the way he left his hand on her knee and stared into her eyes as though he had something important to say when he didn't. She didn't like the way he'd get up to wash his hands when he's petted her baby goat, nor the way his sympathies seemed to snap on and off at will. He didn't seem like a priest at all. He was from Boston. He was waiting to talk to her in the living room.

"Your mother asked me to talk with you," he said. Maggie felt embarrassed. The living room wallpaper had been stripped before her mother got sick, and never replaced. It was Maggie's job to tidy the house, vacuum the frayed carpet, wash the dishes, scrub the peeled linoleum and get the mold off the tiles. She didn't like to have the priest looking around, noticing her work. The crisp sheen of his robe, his scent of wine, and incense: Maggie imagined he even bathed in holy water. He was so clean. But he wasn't God, and he wasn't God's messenger, and he couldn't understand her, with her fraying mother, and fraying home that no matter how she cleaned, it only got dirtier. She was repulsed by his cleanliness. It seemed like a lie.

"Why did you come here?" she asked him.

"I want to help you." The priest's eyebrows arched sadly, his hands folded in his lap.

"I don't need any help." She maintained a physical distance, refusing his gesture which urged her to join him on the couch.

The priest sighed, and smiled. "O.K., look, Maggie, I'm not here as a priest, anyway. I'm here as a

friend, as your mother's friend. You must realize, do you realize, of course, that she's...dying? That she's not going to get better?"

Maggie covered her ears with her hands and began to hum, "Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling Clementine"

"Look Maggie, we're not trying to hurt you, we're trying to help!"

"Oh my darling, oh my darling, Oh my darling Clementine," Maggie kept her hands over her ears. Even so, she could hear her mother's soft voice calling her, and her head hurt. It was too hot and dizzy in the house, unbearably, oppressively stuffy. She and her dad had a plan: they weren't going to give up no matter what! Her mother *wasn't* going to die!

She ran out the living room, through the front door and down the street, into the woods behind the O'Donnell's house. Jason Fletcher was there, and Diana and Linda, and once she stopped crying, they all practiced breathing as fast as they could, then squeezing each other around the waist, until they felt dizzy, and everything seemed dark. They all took turns, trying to pass out.

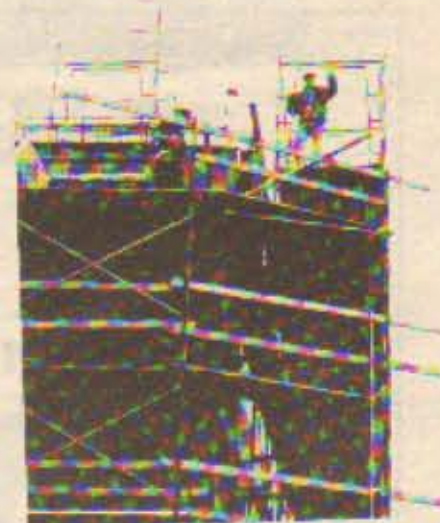
Her mother went into the hospital in late September, and Pete, her goat, died. He had stayed a small, clean little kid. Most days when she went down to his pen, there were hardly any droppings at all. One day, she went to feed him, and he was stiff and dried up. Her father said, something must have been born wrong in that goat. It just couldn't digest.

She and her father drove into Boston every day to visit her mother. Her brother had a job now, at a half-way house, so he couldn't go along. The hospital was a fluorescent, smelly yellow-green. They got to the oncology ward just after dinner, and Maggie heard someone wailing. It was a long, sharp, crazy-sounding wail, reminding Maggie of where her brother worked, and the residents who had to learn to keep their clothes on, and stop smearing the walls. Maggie pictured a face connected to the cry -- a large skull, small sunken eyes, little teeth, straight bowl cut hair. But the sound grew louder as she approached her mother's room, and she thought, "my mother's roommate!" But her mother had no roommate. The cry was coming from her mother. "Get the nurse!" the woman moaned, and while her father bent to hold his wife's hand, Maggie raced down the hall to the floor nurse. When she got back to the room her father was crying, his head on the pillow with the woman, and saying, "this is such a mess."

The nurses administered the dose of morphine, and her mother fell into a deep, incoherent sleep. She seemed much older than she was, with an IV drip attached to her arm, a catheter tube draped around the foot of the bed, a pan for throwing up on the armchair. There was a box of tissues, flowers in little molded ceramic vases, a cross on the wall over her head. But it wasn't a mess. It was the cleanest place Maggie had even been. Too clean. Maggie's father, in a clean green work shirt, work pants. Only his hands, permanently greasy from the machine shop, were dirty. They were the dirtiest things in the room.

Maggie was disgusted by his crying. And also, because he worked too late. He had forgot the promises. So let him die instead, she thought. Let him die, and her mother live. She made it a dirty prayer. Let him die, smelling like motor oil, Let him die, and he'd never embarrass her at school again. He couldn't talk to the principal like her mother could. He hit her and he beat her brother -- let him die, and let her mother (asleep now, skin soft blue, lips gray-pink, hair silver). "Okay God, this is the one big favor I need," she thought. "Let Daddy die, and let Mommy live."

Maggie's father sat up on the edge of the bed, rubbed his eyes and reached for Maggie's hand. But she didn't want to comfort him. He should be comforting her mother. He took her hands and began to hum, wordlessly, across the bed, and she laughed ironically to herself. To imagine he would dare to sing, here, now! She was ashamed as he breathed with his wife, imagining the vibrations of his voice soothing the woman who was scattering, the singing in her falling into the impossibly soft hum of the hospital heating elements, and outside into the beat of crickets, the subtle changes in the weather. An orderly passed outside the door, mopping the trails of dirt they'd left by in the hall. people She wiped a tear as it landed on her father's hand, beading up off grease it seemed he'd never be able to wash away.



Photographer experiences vertigo while waving to construction worker at the Cianbro/Chinichette project on Commercial Street, Portland

Jenny Ruth Yasi graduated from Vermont College of Norwich University, where she concentrated in writing fiction. Another of her short stories, "Life's Illusions" was recently published in "Words & Images," the annual USM literary magazine. She's been taking classes at USM for a degree in English, and this month survived finals and Harbor Voices deadlines all happening in the same week.

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OFF THE TOPIC Business Casual

By Susan Yasi

Strolling the food bar at work, I couldn't help but notice that everyone there was wearing either denim or khaki from the waist down. Hmm. Mere coincidence? I think not. Even though I didn't get the memo, I realized that I'd dressed this morning in the same uniform. Could this be a form of mind control developed using magnets? Possibly having to do with the pyramid power generated by cubicle configuration? Admittedly, I also spotted a couple of pairs of black jeans. Special dispensation from the Dali Llama or something, no doubt, because black Levi's are only representational of perhaps ten percent of the otherwise homogeneously blue denim or khaki (any shade permissible) population. It's the exception that proves the rule.

Though I am seeing some really cool shoes. Can coolness be institutionalized? You bet it can. The accessory police are everywhere & the policy must go like this: Doc Martins or Birkenstocks are fine as are any odd retro-cyber-hip shoe including Converse All-Star Hi-Tops. There is a strict delineation between women's and men's footwear, however. Shoe fashion is no longer taken to be a direct arbiter of the wearer's sexuality; the larger and clunkier the shoe, the more likely it is to be worn by a woman. Men are permitted the slim loafers one used to associate with Patty Duke.

Eyeglasses are hip again (as is the word 'hip') but the lenses have to be the size of dimes and sport the nerdiest, thickest frames available. Over-thick and over-black -- you want everyone to know that you are doing this intentionally and are not wearing actual nerd-glasses (!) Alternatively, one can wear lenses with no apparent frames at all. The specs seem to hang in the air a few inches below your interesting and possibly spiky & 'tipped' hair. Women wear twinset sweaters. I don't care who you are, I'm pretty sure that's corporate policy. I'd have to check the handbook to confirm this, but word on the 'street' is that if you don't have a twinset on your resumé, forget it. Visitors are quietly issued twinsets at the door by security.

This policy can only be overlooked only if you are willing to wear a ring on your thumb and odd knots forming a pattern, sort of like crop circles, in your hair. This last only applies only to straight-haired people. Most people with beautiful natural curls gravitate toward the shave-your-head and/or spike-it-up thing. The overall effect is that of a J Crew overstock catalog. Does the rest of the world dress as if they are preparing for a campus photo-shoot, or is it just us? All that's missing is the big blower fans and an annoying photographer begging us to 'pout for me, Baby'. Many employees choose to pout regardless, rendering the request academic. So I mock, but I also participate in a small way (on days when I feel like it). It's fun, let's face it. I admit it, I own Italian clogs. I've more than one pair of Gap khakis and my glasses seem to be shrinking faster than the Wicked Witch of the West in a downpour. All right, all right, I'd be lying if I said I didn't own a twinset. Or two. But I'm not knotting up my hair. Sometimes you just have to fight the system.

Susan Yasi lives and works in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and visits Peaks Island whenever she can.

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